critical digest

505 FIFTH AVENUE, N. Y. 17, N. Y.
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New York Theatre Week

All Summer Long- Coronet 9/23/54. Playwrights Company presents Robert Anderson's new play about a family whose home is threatened by the rise of a nearby river. With June Walker, John Kerr. Alan Schneider directed...The Way of the World-Cherry Lane-9/29/54. Proscenium Productions present revival of Congreve's Restoration comedy... The Boy Friend- Royale 9/30/54 . Feuer & Martin present English musical comedy lampooning musicals of the Twenties. Book by Sandy Wilson, directed by Vida Hope. Cast features Julie Andrews, John Hewer.

Digests of Current Week Theatre Reviews

Dear Charles- Morosco 9/15/54 Tallulah Bankhead's performance in the Aldrich & Myers production was applauded by all but Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun. The play by Alan Melville, adapted from a French farce, was generally panned by all the NY daily critics as a lightweight, one tune joke. Supporting cast headed by Fred Keating and Werner Klemperer was okayed, though director Edmund Baylies received scant mention. Most of the aisle sitters agreed that the star played only herself, and that this was more than enough to insure a full evening's entertainment. Atkinson, Times, listed play as a pot boiling farce redeemed by the skill and high spirits of the performance. Kerr, Herald Tribune, thought the star won an undivided, uncontested and unrigged verdict over the script. Chapman, News, tabbed lead dynamite. Coleman, Mirror, regretted that the fine company was wasted on such a powderpuff, he would like to have seen the cast tackle School for Scandal. McClain, Journal American, suggested show could have been called "An Evening With Tallulah." Watts, Post, thinks the checkered history of the script is more entertaining than the text. Hawkins, WT&S, wishes the star would find something more suitable to her talents.

The Pony Cart- Theatre De Lys 9/14/54 . Split notices filed by daily critics on Roger Garis' play presented by I B Joselow opened the Off Broadway critical season. Herald Tribune, Mirror and Journal American reviewers thought the play and players worth viewing. Louisa Horton was approved by all. Kerr, Herald Tribune, admitted it was not a distinguished first play, but it has a mechanical competence that keeps it interest. Strassberg, subbing for Coleman, Mirror, found it overly wordy in the first act, but thought it picked up steam in the second and thrid. McClain, Journal American, noted that it is a creditable Off Broadway experiment. The "con" side was headed by Atkinson, Times who panned it as laboriously treated Ibsen. Critic urged house management to return Three Penny Opera. Watts, Post, vetoed it as considerably muddled proof that seriousness doesn't necessarily make good drama.

Hayride- 48th St Theatre 9/13/54.-9/25/54. Side-stepping the question if theatre reviewers should have been invited in the first place to cover the "hillbilly musical" presented by Barron Howard and Jack Stone, half of the NY daily critics approved proceedings, in a mild tone, for those who like such music. Funke, Times, reckoned those folks who like such should see it. McClain, Journal American, admired the "artists." Hawkins, WT&S, marked it for specialists only. While Watts, Post, admitted he didn't mind it. Kerr, Herald Tribune, did mind it. Show merely aroused the damnyankee in Chapman, News , While Strassberg, Mirror, feared Broadway wasn't ready for show, or vica versa. Sunshine Sue and Zag, the Ozark Mountain Boy, were singled out for praise in most.

Off Broadway

Eugene O'Neill's Beyond the Horizon will be presented at the Green Room Studio, 145 Bleecker, starting Oct 15.

I Feel Wonderful, a new revue by Jerry Herman will be presented by Sidney Oshrin at Theatre De Lys starting Oct 18..The Snow Was Black by George Simenon will be presented by John Griffin and Gene Frankle at Theatre de Lys later this fall.

Major Barbara and The Cretan Woman both close S un, Sept 26...The Clandestine Marriage opens Oct 2 at Provincetown ...Studio Six will present The Big Knife at 1129 6th Ave in early Oct.

Village Theatre Center, 116 Christopher St, will open Oct 1 with all kinds of theatre articles, books, etc for sale.

The Early Primrose just manages to avoid being sordid due to some quiet acting and Gordon Ewen's guarded direction, rates Geor, Variety. But reporter feared Royal Playhouse, show suffers from lack of theme.

West Coast

Believe You Me" new comedy by Marcel Klauber-Charles Williams was tried out at Masquers Clubhouse...Main Objective opens Oct 1 at Actors, Inc, Playhouse and Beach House Nov 15 at same...Tabloids '54 a new play by John Calhoun and Mauritz Hugo opens Oct 15 at Pasadena Playhouse...Thomas Henry has been named associate producing director of Pasadena Playhouse.

Theatre Record Notes

18 readings by Charles Laughton taken from the soundtracks of his TV films have been bought by Marc Frederic and will be issued as a Tempo LP...MGM issuing sound track of "Brigadoon" film...Fanny original cast album will be cut by RCA Victor.

Theatre Film Notes

Vivian Blaine signed to portray her original role in Samuel Goldwyn's film version of Guys and Dolls...Universal will film Song of Norway...William Holden will have lead in film production of Oh Men, Oh Women.

Theatre TV & Radio Notes

Dr. Frank Baxter's litagary discussions resume Sept 26 on CBS TV... Gilbert Highet's "People, Places and Books" talks are heard Tuesdays at 9 over WQXR, NYC... Variety reports TV salries for Betty Hutton of $50,000, Ginger Rogers of $40,000 and Ann Sothern of $60,000 for one show each...Helen Hayes will appear on David O Selznick's "Light's Diamond Jubilee" Oct 24 on 4 networks...Maxwell Anderson is adapting Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" for CBS TV Yuletide show..."Angels Auditions" new series will be made in 3 D film.

Vaudeville

"Autumn Album" is new revue at Radio City Music Hall. Marlene Dell and Don Farnsworth, Marilyn Murphy, Eric Hutson, and Gil Johnson are featured. "Brigadoon" is the film...Palace stage show is headed by Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom and Little Jack Little. Film is "White Fire" with Scott Brady and Mary Castle.

Green Room Department

PRO THEATRE BENEFITS...Though the annoyance to players is understandable, Burr, Playbill, thinks the advantages of theatre parties far outweigh the disadvantages. Any method by which money can be raised for charity seems to be a good thing.The producer is certainly justified in protecting his investors' cash. While the extra performances guaranteed by theatre parties give additional work to the very actors who complain.

COLUMN TIPS...Tallulah Bankhead will take a salary cut when and if necessary in Dear Charles, hears Eaton...Anniversary Waltz backstage feud ready to boil,reports Winchell.

PROBLEMS OF CRITICS...Strangers when introduced to drama critics usually assume they are movie critics, because outsiders mostly have never heard of any other kind, explains Watts,Post...At least one of the drama critics will mistake his desire to hold hands,so to speak,with a new young pretty actress for acting ability predicts George Jean Nathan.

BEHAVIOR GUIDE...If a playgoer is lucky enough to have aisle seats, Chapman, News, he should get there 15 minutes before curtain time. He will then have to stand up 5 times, muttering inaudible imprecations, critic chides. He also warns ticket buyers never,but never,go Down for a Smoke to the lounge in the cellar. It looks like the exercise yard in a death house.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS....New Haven's Shubert Theatre has been the proving ground for more long run hits than any other theatre in America, ventures Morehouse,World Telegram & Sun...NY's Battery Park would make an ideal scene for a professional outdoor drama, suggests Louis Simon in letter to NY Times Drama Mailbag...Press agents were advised by Kerr, Herald Tribune, to skip such pre-opening gambits as suggesting the producer is brave for doing the play,suggesting that not every one will like a given play, and suggesting that the play is the kind to bring something to. Critic wife suggests later type is kind he should bring a book to.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...TV came in for praise from two top theatre people. Lawrence Langertold Herridge,Post,that it is the current training ground for playwrights and a showcase for their works. While Jule Styne told Morehouse, WT&S, that the starsof tomorrow are being born on TV at this moment.

Pros & Cons by TMK

The Pony Cart is a good first play on a vital social problem that is injured in its current production by several cases of miscasting plus some uninspired and stilted direction. Louisa Horton's portrayal is convincing and heartwarming throughout. Recasting and tightening of several scenes could turn this into a dramatic and important evening in the theatre. As it is the play remains worthwhile seeing for the fine performance of Miss Horton.

Dear Charles is a very fine excuse to present the new,and so beautiful,Tallulah portraying herself to the best advantage. No matter how flimsy the script it doesn't get in the way of the comic genius of the star. The same can be said for the professional supporting cast. What might have been an obscene joke is presented as a delightful evening's entertainment by the sheer beauty and ability of the star.

3 acting teams set up by Actors Equity under the supervision of Helen Hayes, Peggy Wood and Maurice Evans will present "dramatic reading" programs within a 75 mile radius of NYC. Walden Programs, Inc, is the booking agency. Jack Manning has directed the Hayes group in excerpts from Shakespeare, William Miles-Bill Butler have directed the Wood's group in scenes from Burning Bright and Anne of the Thousand Days, and Billy Matthews has directed the Evans group in segments from Oscar Wilde and James M. Barrie. The groups will play in NYC at Columbia University's McMillin Hall on Nov 17, Jan 19 and Mar 16. The project was set up as an experiment last May by the actor's union to stimulate employment.

Plays

Lunatics and Lovers is title picked by Sidney Kingsley for his new comedy... Portrait of a Lady with Jennifer Jones opens Dec 9 at ANTA Playhouse...Champagne Complex postponed until next spring...The Shoemaker's Children will test at Bucks County Playhouse Oct 25...What Every Woman Knows with Helen Hayes opens at City Center Dec 22.

People

Maurice Zolotow named drama critic of Theatre Arts...William K Zinsser, drama editor of NY Herald Tribune, engaged to Caroline Fraser, Life reporter...Powers Gouraud, Philadelphia drama critic and broadcaster, died at age 75 of a heart attack ...Dept. of Justice has appealed U.S. District Court ruling on its anti trust case against the Shuberts to the Supreme Court...Theatre Costume workers signed a new contract granting them $3 more per week...Pauline Myers has filed charges against Jean Carson for "conduct unbecoming a performer", both are in Anniversary Waltz.

Award Department

Rosemary Shein, 20, Bronxville, NY, won the American Theatre Wing's Mary MacArthur Scholarship. 13 others won scholarships...Pulitzer Prize rules for American plays have been changed suggesting prize be given to "preferably original" item.

Other Broadways

St. Joan with Jean Arthur opened nationwide tour in Wilmington...Three for To-Night with Harry Belafonte opens national tour Oct 25 on west coast...Two Tennessee Williams plays will debut in New Orleans Jan 17...Oklahoma touring company opened in Bridgeport...Wallingford, Conn, citizens feted Oakdale Theatre at a townwide party... A 3000 square feet stage of wood and aluminum is being manufactured to convert the rostrum of the UN General Assembly into a stage when needed...

Theatre Book Notes

Random House has published text of Kismet....Jessie Royce Landis' memoirs published by W H Allen, London, under title "You Won't Be So Pretty-But You'll Know More".

CRITICAL DIGEST
505-Fifth Ave, NYC

First Class Mail